

Environmental Impact Report/ Environmental Impact Statement: Merced to Fresno Section

Staff Presentation on the Final EIR

May 2, 2012



Agenda

- Merced to Fresno Section
- Environmental Review Status
- Preferred Alternative
- Design Refinements
- Key Issues Raised by Public Comments and Final EIR/EIS Responsiveness
- Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program
- Significant and Unavoidable Impacts
- Findings of Fact and Overriding Considerations

Merced to Fresno Section



Alternatives Evaluated



Environmental Review Status

- Public Draft EIR/EIS
 - Public comment period: 60-day review period that ended October 13, 2011.
- Board identified the Preferred Alternative on December 13, 2011
 - Considered the comments and technical EIR/EIS findings in identifying the Preferred Alternative.
- Administrative draft Final EIR/EIS reviewed by EPA, Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Reclamation.
- Final EIR/EIS
 - Published on April 20, 2012
- Board meeting to consider EIR Certification under CEQA
 - Opportunity for public comment – May 2, 2012, Fresno
 - Consideration of certification – May 3, 2012, Fresno

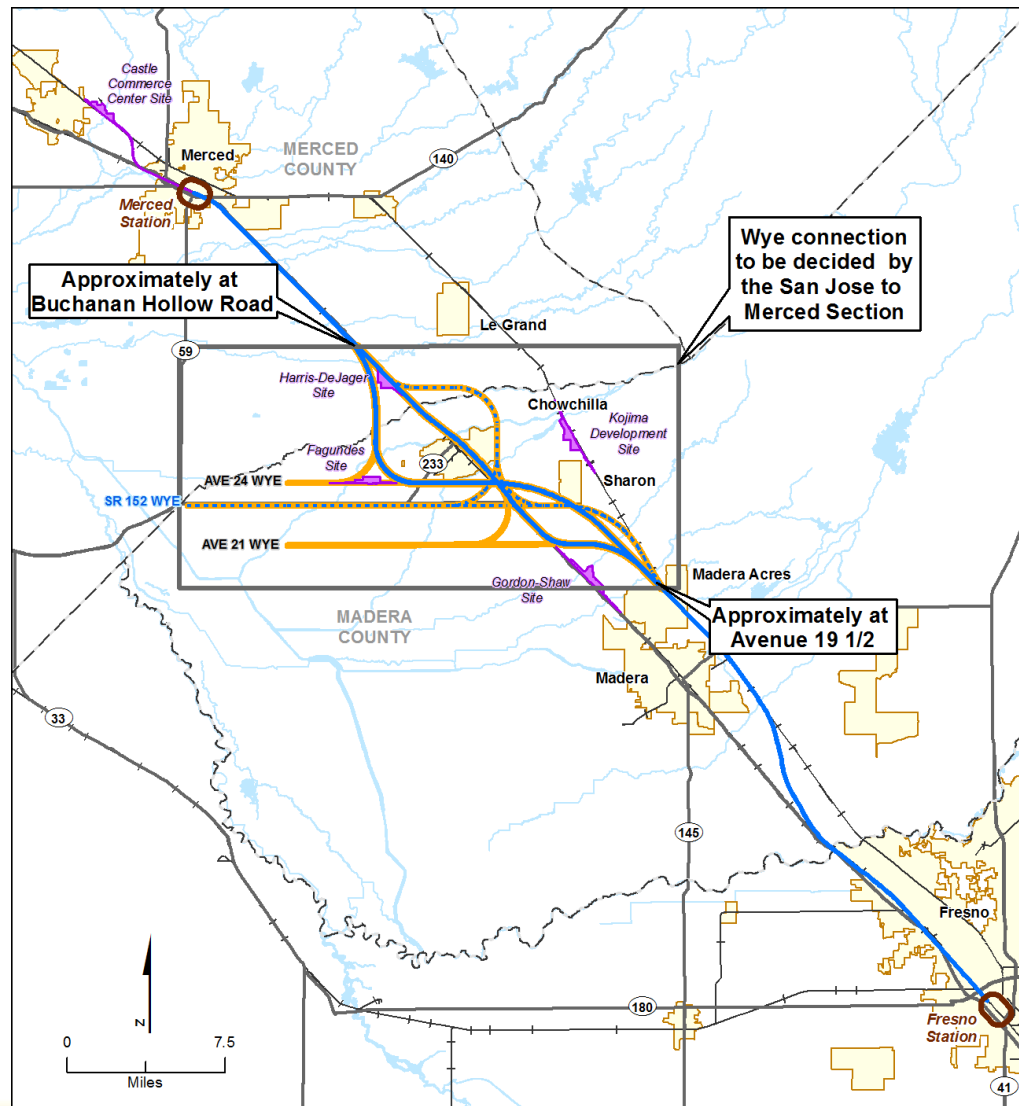
Selection of Preferred Alternative

- Preferred Alternative
 - Hybrid Alternative
 - Downtown Merced Station
 - Mariposa Station Alternative in Fresno
- Hybrid Alternative Highlights
 - Fewer community impacts than UPRR/SR 99 and BNSF alternatives.
 - Fewer biological impacts than BNSF Alternative, similar to UPRR/SR 99 Alternative.
 - Impacts on Prime Agricultural lands similar to UPRR/SR 99 Alternative (less than the BNSF Alternative) but greater impacts on Important Farmlands than the UPRR/SR 99.

Selection of Preferred Alternative

- Status:
 - **FRA** supports the Hybrid Alternative as Preferred Alternative.
 - **USACE and EPA** have provided preliminary concurrence of the Hybrid Alternative as the least environmentally damaging, practicable alternative (Section 404(b)(1), Clean Water Act).
 - **FRA** determined that the Hybrid Alternative would result in the least harm (Section 4(f), Department of Transportation Act).
 - **State Historic Preservation Officer** has provided preliminary concurrence with Findings of Effect (Section 106, National Historic Preservation Act).

Preferred Alternative



Design Refinements

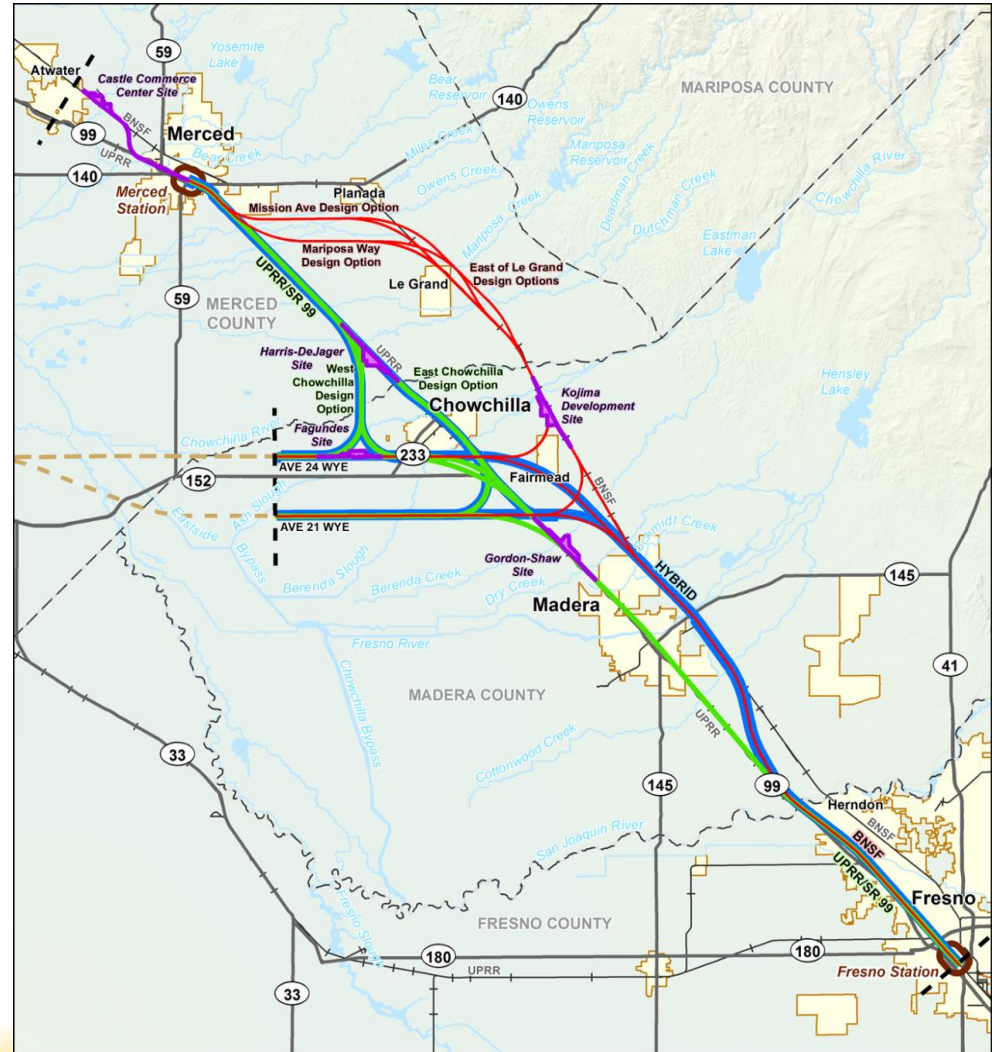
- Advanced design to 30% in Fresno
- Slab track versus ballasted track
- Refined design, consistent with design criteria, to reduce impacts on:
 - Businesses
 - Circulation
 - Biological resources

Comments on Draft EIR/EIS

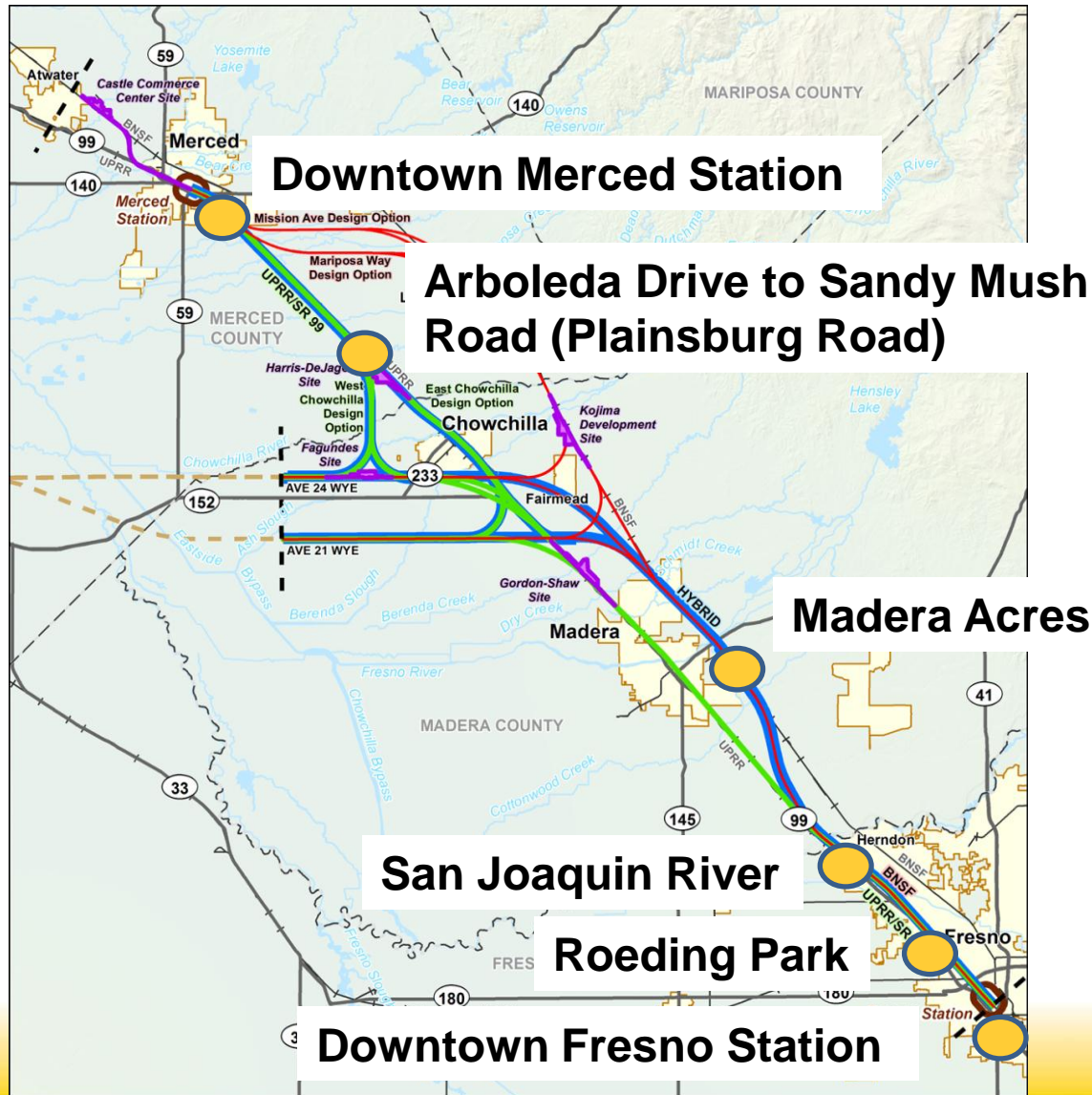
- Approximately 700 comment submittals from:
 - California legislators
 - Local governments
 - Federal agencies and tribes
 - State and regional agencies
 - Businesses
 - Organizations
 - Residents and other interested members of the public

Primary Issues Identified in Public and Agency Comments

- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Biological Resources
- Safety
- Socioeconomics
- Agricultural Lands
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Visual Resources
- Cultural Resources



Locations that Exemplify the Resource Issues



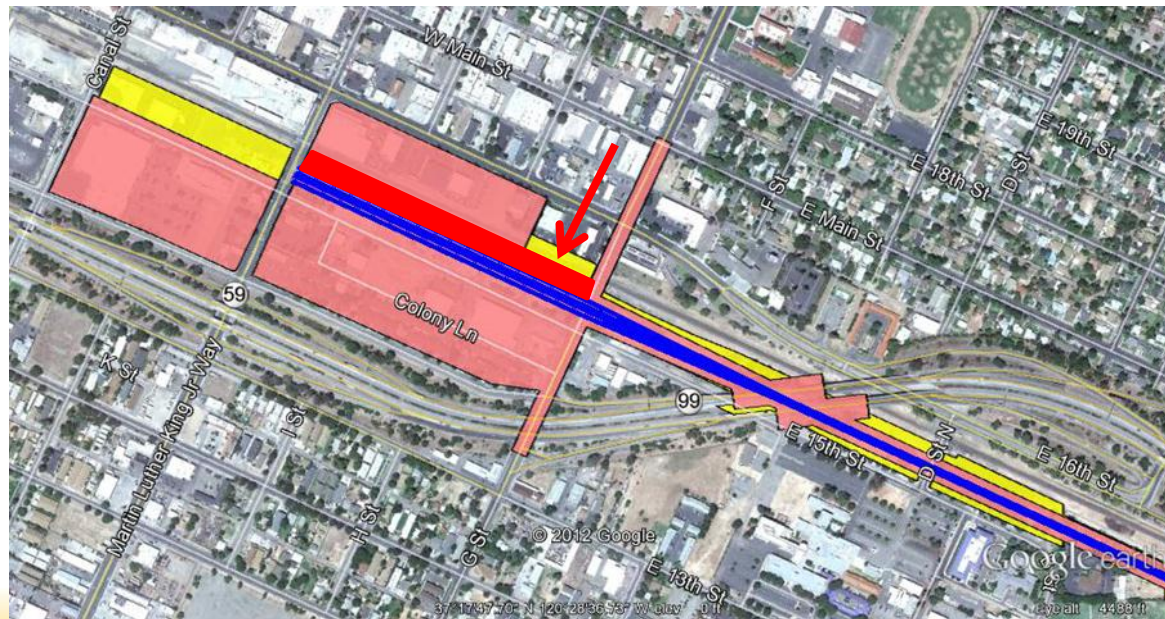
Downtown Merced Station Area Transportation/Safety

- Fire lane safety
- Traffic circulation and overcrossing
- Safe pedestrian/bike overcrossing on G Street



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Downtown Merced Station Area Transportation/Safety

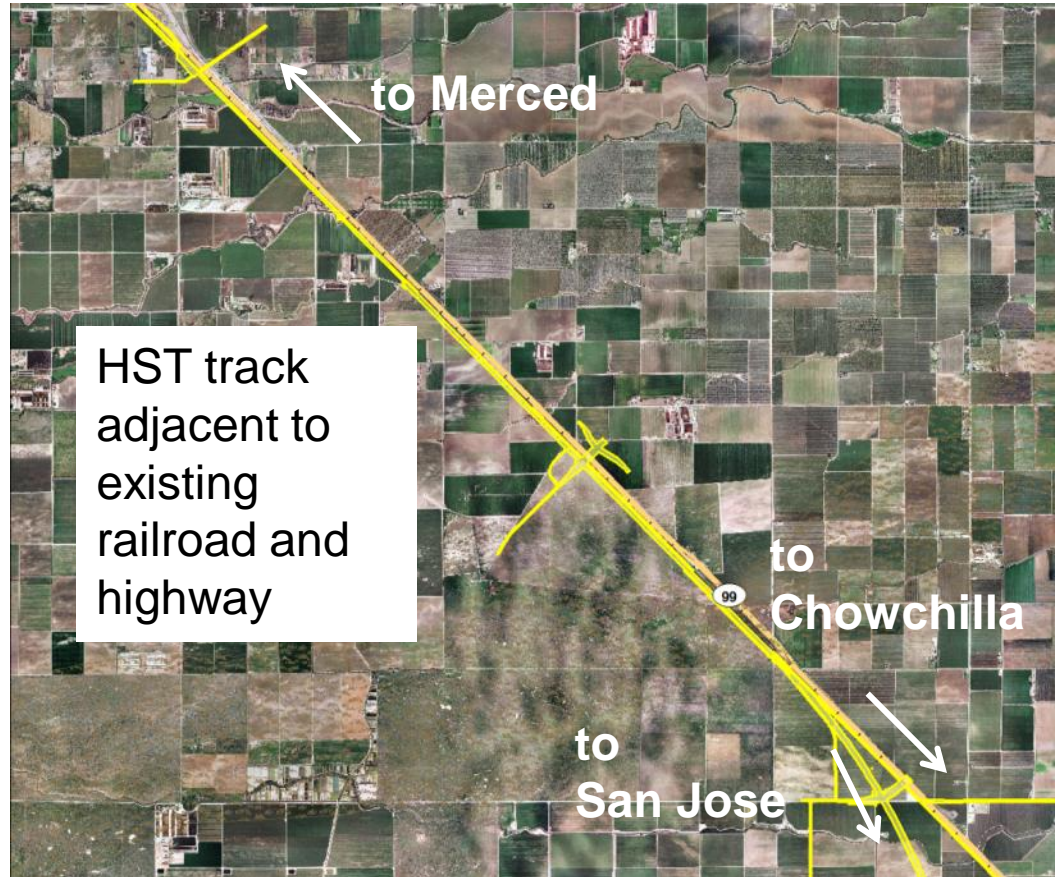
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Arboleda Drive to Sandy Mush Road

Transportation, Agricultural Lands, Biological Resources

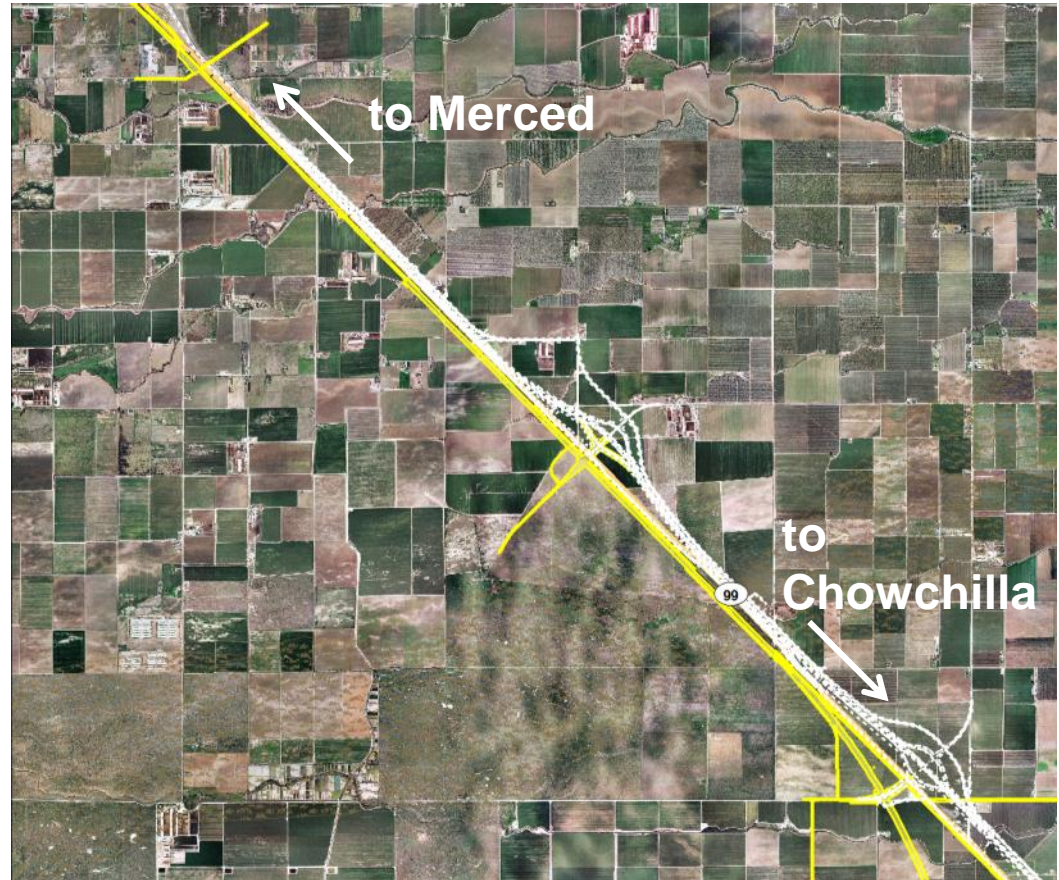
- Minimize agricultural impact
- Accommodate planned SR 99 modification
- Maintain habitat connectivity



Arboleda Drive to Sandy Mush Road

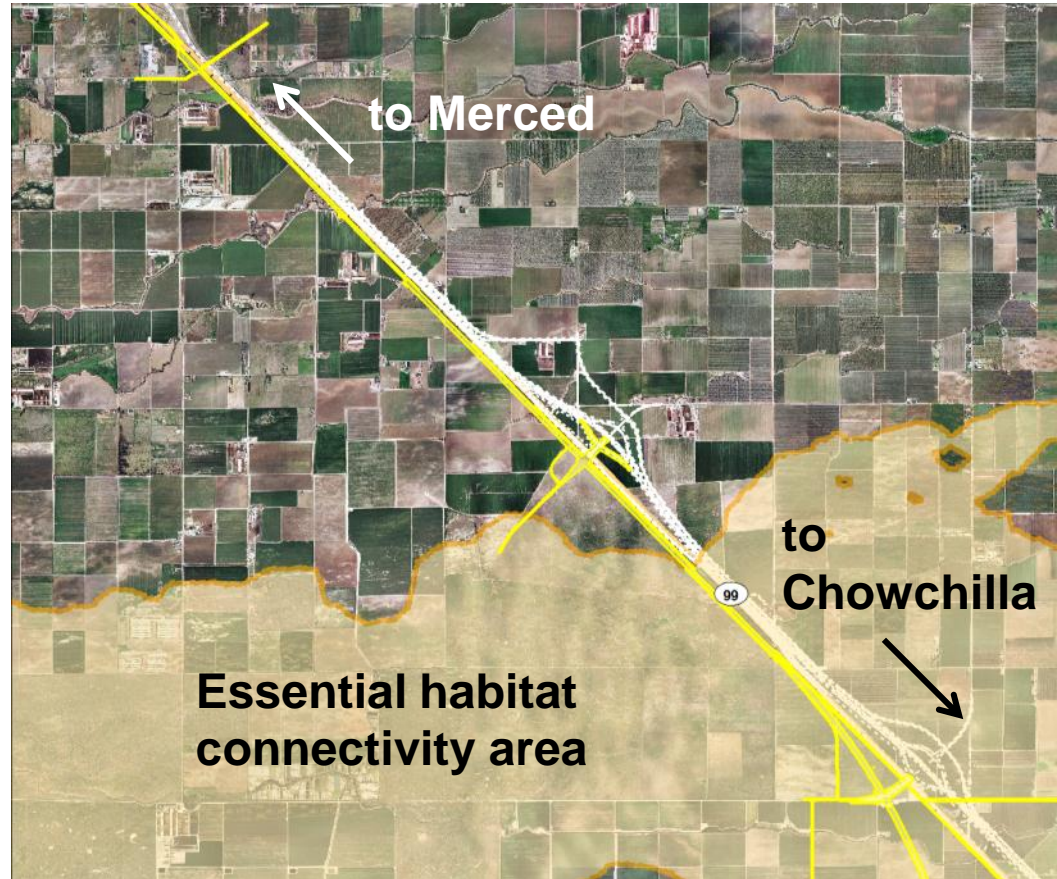
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Arboleda Drive to Sandy Mush Road Transportation, Agricultural Lands, Biological Resources

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Madera Acres Area

Transportation, Safety, and Noise Improvements



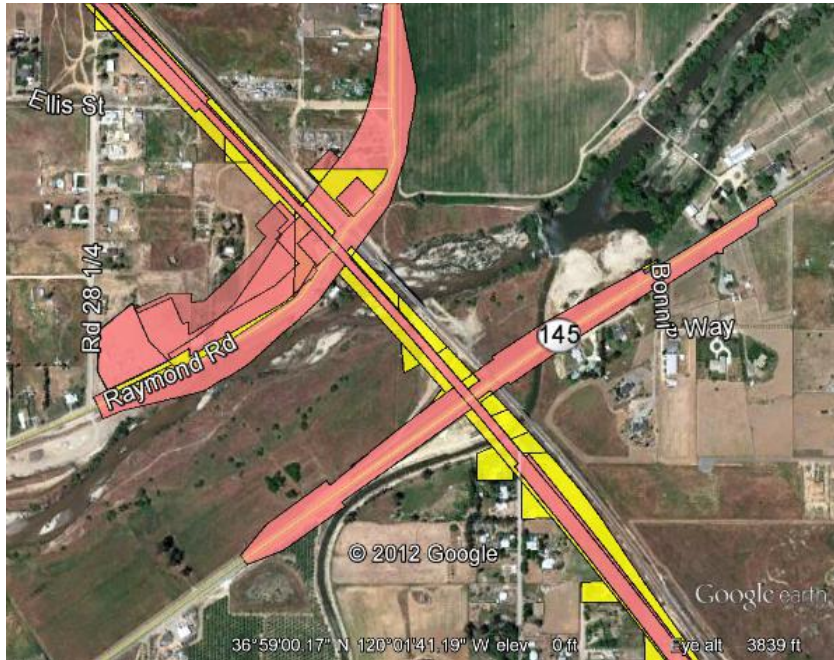
Fresno River Biological Resources



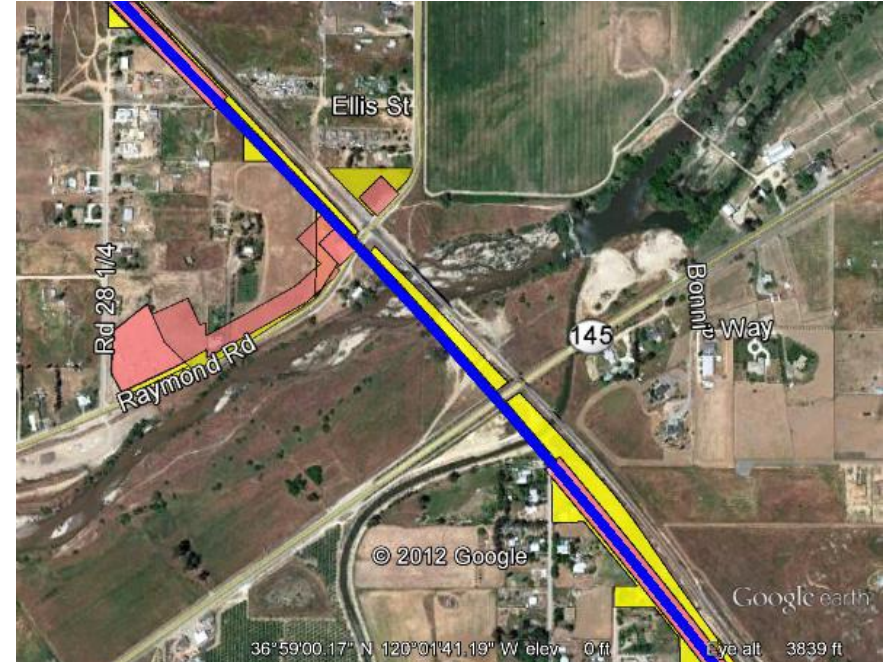
Crossing of the Fresno River

Fresno River – Elevate HST Tracks

Socioeconomics and Biological Resources



**Draft EIR/EIS footprint shows:
Road modifications needed with
span over Fresno River.**



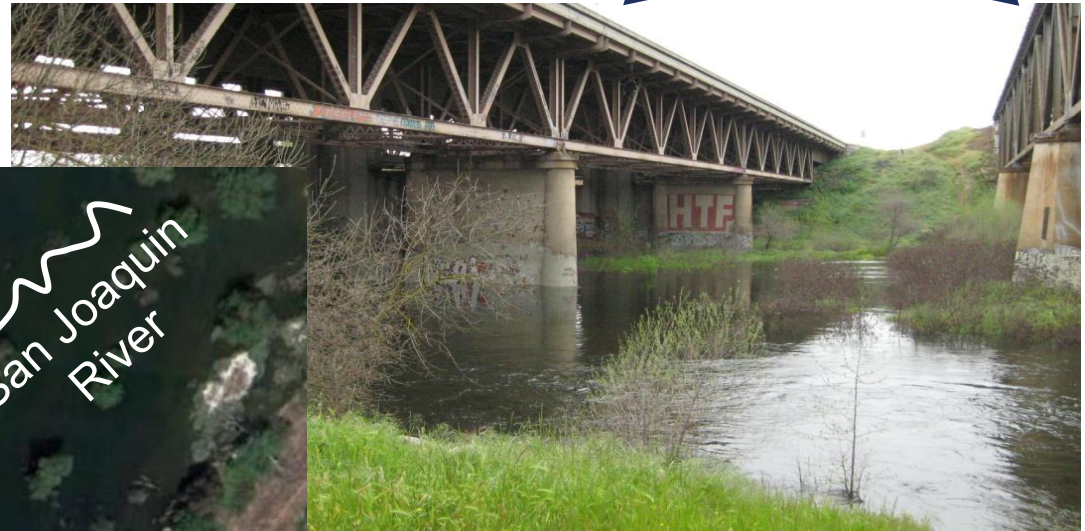
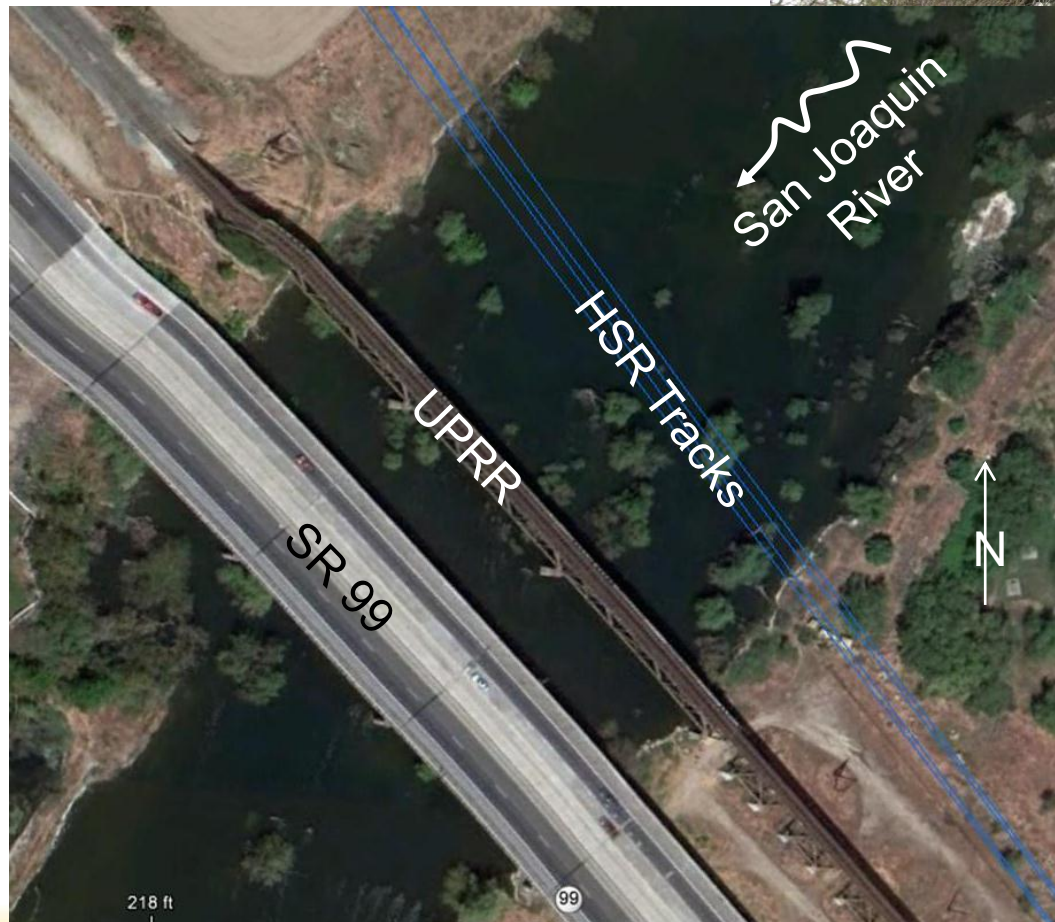
**Final EIR/EIS footprint shows:
Elevated span eliminates the need
for road modifications.**

School Districts

Safety/Children's Health/District Revenue

- Safe bus and walk to school routes
 - School revenues
 - Effects during construction
- ✓ Maintain or improve existing system
 - ✓ Available housing within districts for relocations
 - ✓ Air quality mitigation and regulated construction methods

San Joaquin River Biological Resources



Roeding Park

Transportation, Parks, Cultural and Visual Resources, Noise

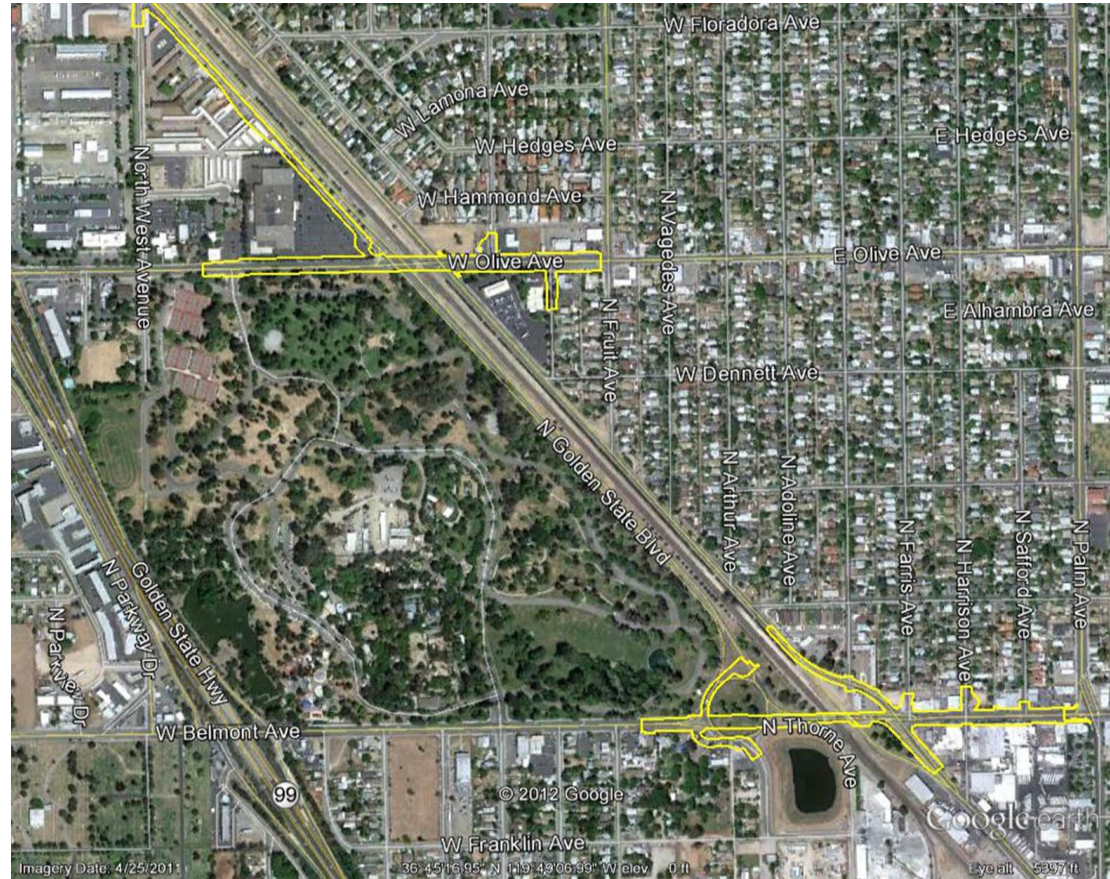
- Balance circulation with park and cultural resources
- Olive Avenue overcrossing, improve safety, and eliminate railroad horns
- Consider visual and noise effects



Roeding Park

Transportation, Parks, Cultural and Visual Resources, Noise

- Balance circulation with park and cultural resources
- Olive Avenue overcrossing, improve safety, and eliminate railroad horns
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Roeding Park – Northeast Corner



Existing Conditions

Roeding Park – Northeast Corner



Olive Avenue Overcrossing and High-Speed Train

Roeding Park – Northeast Corner



Olive Avenue Overcrossing and Sound Barrier

Roeding Park – Northeast Corner



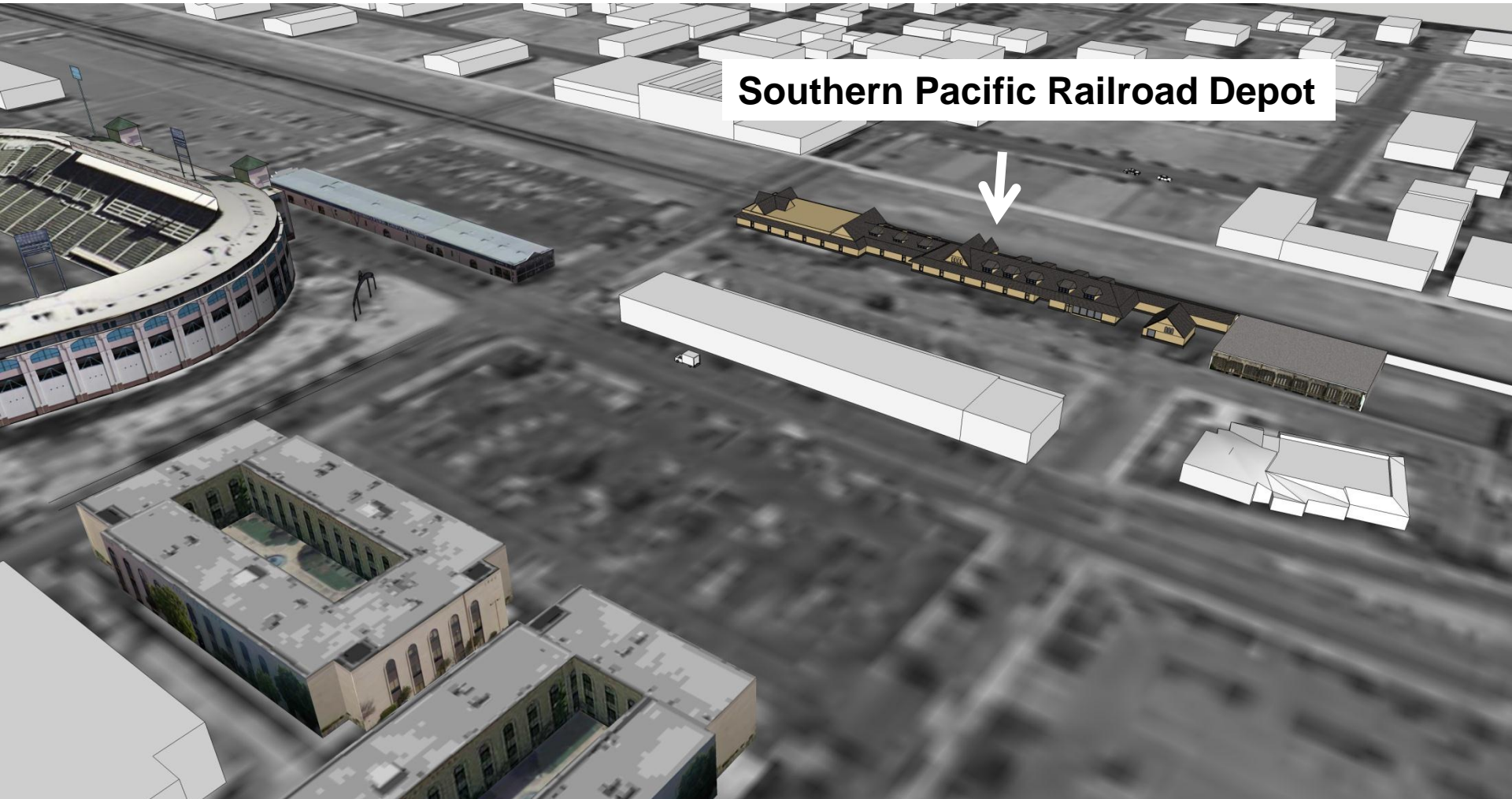
**Olive Avenue Overcrossing and Sound Barrier
Partially Hidden by Additional Vegetation**

Downtown Fresno Station – Mariposa Street Alternative

- Consistent with Downtown Revitalization Plan
- Sensitive to traffic circulation needs



Downtown Fresno Station – Mariposa Street Alternative



Downtown Fresno Station



Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

- The Project minimizes impacts by
 - Including design features
 - Complying with applicable regulations
- For each mitigation measure, the MMRP identifies:
 - The party responsible for implementation
 - The timing of implementation
 - The implementation mechanism
- Construction would adhere to the MMRP

Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

- Noise
- Agricultural Lands
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Cultural Resources

Findings of Fact and Overriding Considerations

- Presents a project's significant unavoidable impacts
- Describes the economic, social, and other benefits of a project that balance these significant unavoidable impacts

Both will be presented to the Board tomorrow

Next Steps Following Project Approval

- Ongoing permitting
- Advance right-of-way acquisition process
- Progress design from preliminary to final design
 - Continue to explore opportunities to further reduce impacts below those evaluated in the EIR/EIS
 - Refine mitigation through coordination with stakeholders

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- Questions?

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